TL 29 33

East Timor at the IPU meeting, Uruguay

A slightly abridged translation of a Kompas report, 27 October 1990, entitled:

Attempt to include East Timor in the resolution of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference fails.

An attempt by Portuguese and Angolan parliamentarians to have East Timor recognised as a 'non-self-governing territory' at the recent conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Uruguay was defeated after strong lobbying by the Indonesian delegation.

The Portuguese and Angolan delegtes strongly denounced human rights violations in East Timor and described the annexation of East Timor as similar to Iraq's annexation of Kuwait. Almeida Santos, former Minister for Overseas Territories and now a Portuguese MP, said that Indonesia refuses to understand world opinion and has disregarded international law. "Annexation and human rights violations, whether by Saddam Hussein or Indonesia, are identical and will remain so to the end of time."

The Indonesian delegation replied by saying that decolonisation had taken place and self-determination had been exercised by the people of East Timor in a peaceful and orderly fashion and in accord with the UN Charter. They said any comparison with Kuwait was 'absurd' because Kuwait was an independent and sovereign country whereas East Timor was not. The East Timorese expressed their wish to integrate with Indonesia 14 years ago. There have since been two general elections and for the past ten years, rapid economic development has taken place, far surpassing what happened during 400 years of Portuguese rule.

The Indonesian delegation's efforts to prevent East Timor being mentioned in the resolution began at the Drafting Committee. Many delegations supported a move for Indonesia to have a seat on the Committee. This placed the Indonesian delegation in a strong position to influence the Committee's decisions.

Canada initially included East Timor in its statement as a non-self-governing territory but subsequently apologised for this and sought Indonesian support for Canada to be appointed to chair the Drafting Committee. Indonesia agreed to support this proposal. Angola was also a member of the Committee, but its proposal regarding East Timor was rejected. Indonesia's open diplomacy was finally successful when the draft was adopted by acclamation at the Plenary session.

The final Conference resolution included a strong denunciation of Iraq's annexation of Kuwait.

Portuguese parliamentary mission
Informal approaches (at the IPU conference) regarding the visit to

East Timor by a Portuguese Parliamentry Mission met with a frosty reception from the Portuguese MPs. Pressure for the visit has come only from the Portuguese president and prime minister, while Portuguese parliamentary sources consider that nothing positive can come of the visit. Almeido Santos said that he does not want to be a member of the mission to East Timor.

According to the Indonesian parliamentary delegation, such an attitude is to Indonesia's advantage, considering that the initiative for the visit came from Portugal.

However, several Portuguese parliamentarians at the IPU meeting recognised that Indonesia had brought rapid progress to East Timor but believed that this would only happen while Suharto remained president. When his presidency ends, they believe, Indonesia will 'collapse'. It will be then that East Timor starts opposing integration.